

Parks & Recreation Council

**LOCATION:
Indian River Marina
39415 Inlet Road
Rehoboth Beach, DE 19971**

**Thursday, August 3, 2017
9:30 a.m.**

Council Members

Ron Mears, Chairperson
Clyde Shipman
Jim White
Jan Durham

Ron Breeding, Vice Chairperson
Edith Mahoney
Greg Johnson

Joe Smack
Brenda Bramble
Ed Lewandowski

Staff

Ray Bivens, Director
Greg Abbott

Esther Knotts
Cindy Todd

Matt Ritter
Bob Ehemann

Public

Kathy Casey, First State Pickle Ball Club
Anne Farley, First State Pickle Ball Club

Tony Lingenfelter, First State Pickle Ball Club
Jeanne Chiquoine, American Cancer Society

I. Introductions/Announcements

- A. Chairman Ron Mears called the Council meeting to order at 9:35 a.m.
- B. Ron stated that State Parks lost a good friend and supporter with the passing of Molly Murray.
- C. Ron acknowledged Park Superintendent Doug Long and Assistant Superintendent Dave Trefsgar who gave overviews of Delaware Seashore State Park and the Indian River Marina.

II. Official Business/Council Activities

A. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Ron Mears asked for Council approval of the May 4th meeting minutes. Ron Breeding made a motion to approve the minutes. Clyde Shipman seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

B. Council Member Reports:

- 1. Fort Delaware Society – *Edith Mahoney reported.*

The June 10th Kids Day was successful.

The Fort Delaware Society will be doing outreach on the 15th.

The Society is losing board members due to health issues.

Edith stated that Fort Delaware does not have a Friends group and stated that Society members do not like to be referred to as a Friend group.

2. Natural Areas Advisory Council – *Jim White reported.*

The Committee is trying to raise exposure of natural areas throughout the state. They are enhancing their web presence, working on a brochure and working with State Park Trainer Educator Angel Burns to set up programs in natural areas.

Ed Lewandowski has been appointed to represent the Natural Areas Advisory Council on the Parks and Recreation Council. Ed introduced himself and Council members welcomed him.

3. Wildlife Management Committee – *Clyde Shipman reported.*

The hunting rules and maps for the 2017 season are being printed for distribution.

This year there will be the 1-day hunts at Brandywine Creek State Park.

The Division is working on hunting leases for the Godwin Tract and Killens Pond State Park for the 2018-2019 season.

A neighbor at the Perry Tract (near Angola) does not want reforestation to continue.

Natural Resource Police Officers were conducting fishing compliance checks on July 16th near the 18th Street Dam in Brandywine Park when an angler landed a snakehead (destructive invasive species).

An emerald ash borer was caught in a trap in Fairhill, Maryland.

Clyde mentioned that when he was the Assistant Park Superintendent, the Division didn't own the Marina. The Division purchased Burton's Island in 1972. At the time, Del DOT helped to relocate people who had trailers on the Island. He said at one time Delaware Seashore was very much a "seasonal" park (Memorial Day to Labor Day).

4. Resident Curatorship – *Joe Smack reported.*

The Sussex County Land Trust is getting closer to receiving their certificate of occupancy.

The legal review of the Resident Curatorship Program by the Department of Justice determined there is nothing in Delaware Code that allows the Division to enter into Resident Curatorship agreements. The Division will seek legislation to establish guidelines for this program. In the interim, the Division hopes to enter into 25 year contracts with parties interested in the curatorship program. These contracts would allow for a 25 year extension. If legislation changes these contracts would be adapted to comply with the new law.

There are 3 parties interested in two properties, the Sarah Brooks House and the Warrington House.

5. Delaware Land and Water Conservation Trust Funds – *Bob Ehemann reported.*

The Division received 28 grant requests totaling \$4M. A review committee made up of members from the Parks and Recreation Council and the Council on Greenways and Trails met to review the submittals. Letters were sent to potential recipients. Application packets are due back in September. The committee will meet again to review the packets. Ron Breeding is a member of the committee and said the joint gathering went very well. He is excited about working with the committee.

III. Public Comment

There was no public comment. Visitors introduced themselves and shared their affiliation.

IV. Staff Reports

1. Policy/Legislation – *Ray Bivens reported.*

The Department received a memo from the Office of Management and Budget regarding new management controls for the hiring of personnel. Ray is hopeful that this will ease some of the restrictions we are currently facing. The Department lost 26 positions, the Division lost two.

The Division received \$3.5M in capital funding to be split with the Division of Fish and Wildlife. There was no State trails money allocated. Ray does not think this will impact the Division's trail building.

No Open Space Funding was allocated but \$1.25M was put aside for the Felician Sister's property.

"One time funding" was allocated to develop a task force to look at Canby Park. This is a shared park (City and County) and Ray was assigned to that task force.

2018 Bond Bill Epilogue Language states, "the Division of Parks shall plan, develop, and explore public/private partnerships for the Delaware State Park system for active family and senior activities such as pickle ball."

Clyde asked if the lodging tax was approved. Ray stated it was not.

I. Section Updates – A handout was provided to the Council and highlights were discussed.

1. Administrative Services – *Greg Abbott shared highlights from the Park Council Report.*

Greg talked about the changes to the park website and stated that the redesign should be completed soon and will be introduced to the public in conjunction with the Division's new branding campaign.

Delaware Seashore is celebrating its 50th anniversary. Creative services designed a poster to commemorate the event.

Volunteers have contributed a total of 126,384 hours to the Division this year. That is equivalent of 65 full-time employees.

The AmeriCorps Veterans Team (made up of people who have served in the military) participated in the Corps Network event in Washington, D.C. in June, visiting all three Delaware legislators and participating in service project work with other Corps members from various states. Member Earl Bowman made a presentation to Delaware congressional members and Corps participants on the Vet Corps program.

AmeriCorps Program Director Karen Minner was selected as the AmeriCorps Delaware – Program Director of the Year at Service Celebration sponsored by the Delaware Commission on National and Volunteer Service (Delaware AmeriCorps Office).

Currently the Division has 95 active interns. These talented individuals are from all over the country; 51 are from Delaware, 44 are from 17 different states.

On June 7, Division superintendents and Dover liaisons to the Friends groups participated in a survey and facilitated meeting discussing the groups in the parks and how to strengthen relationships and partnerships. On June 21, a similar meeting was conducted with the presidents of the Friends groups, which also included a survey and facilitated conversation.

Fiscal year 2018 is off to a great start. For the first 13 days of July, all measures of camping business are up substantially over same period in 2016.

The Cape Henlopen Camp store has been a huge success. Revenue for the first two months was \$43,296.80.

Advance reservations have increased this year. The Killens Pond Water Park offered advance ticket sales for the first time this year and more than 20% of participants have taken advantage of the service through June 30. Growth in online advance ticket sales for Fort Delaware took a major leap this year, up 114% from the previous year. Online reservations for Fort Delaware are up 114% due to a social media “push”.

The Marketing team has been working closely with Miles Media, , an analysis and design company, to conduct market research in order to more clearly identify Delaware State Park’s target audience and a potential Division rebrand. The research phase is near completion and once compiled, will guide the rebranding of Delaware State Parks with a new logo, tag line, video, website, and overall look and feel.

Delaware State Parks has 36,640 followers on social media.

2. Operations and Programming – Matt Ritter shared highlights from the Parks Council Report.

Coastal Region:

Fenwick Island State Park was featured by *Only in Delaware* this spring as the beach with the most pristine, white sand in Delaware.

More than 1,200 Visitors attended “Delaware Goes to War: Victory in Europe” at Fort Miles on April 29. Activities in the Cantonment Area and Battery 519 included tours,

displays, speakers and films relating to Delaware's role in World War II. The day was filled with great programming and 50-100 reenactors participated.

Memorial Day weekend, occupancy levels in the facilities located in the Delaware Seashore State Park region ranged from 98% to 100%. Last week, the South East Day Area was full during the week. We continue to see a rise in the number of visitors coming to the park during the week.

A disarmed 1942 M2 mine case weighing 400 pounds discovered near the Cape Henlopen Fishing Pier last year was transported to Fort Hancock (Sandy Hook National Park) the last week in June. The State Police and personnel from DAFB examined the mine to ensure it was disarmed.

The Division received an email from frequent camper Brian Berchtold who spent last week in the newly renovated Cape Henlopen campground. Brian wrote, *"What a great improvement over the old facilities...Wanted to specifically complement the drainage. We had a very heavy downpour while we were there and it was amazing how the site/road design was able to drain away the water. The sloping of the roadways to the center with drain grates/piping (vice the typical sloping to the shoulder) worked great...our compliments to the engineers on that one...Also wanted to compliment the hosts that are there. While I was still parking the unit, Jim (one of the hosts) walked over to see if I needed any help positioning the unit then offered any assistance we needed during our stay. It was noted that all the hosts (we met Jim, Sandy his wife, and Bill) did an excellent job of picking up litter and just keeping the place looking great and in control."*

The Division has been focusing on providing programs for our marina slip holders. The First Annual Tuna Blast Tournament was held at the Indian River Marina on July 4 with 31 slip holders participating. The top prizes were given for a 120-pound tuna and a 4-pound flounder.

On July 19, Cape Henlopen hosted a 40th Anniversary Celebration for Mid-Atlantic Field Hockey. Camp Director Frannie Slabonik was honored with a plaque recognizing the partnership between Parks and Mid-Atlantic Field Hockey. Mid-Atlantic Field Hockey is a great partner. Every year they stay in the youth camp and rent the parade ground.

Northern Region:

Volunteers and members of the Fly Fishers organization, Bank of America and the Wilmington Trail Club recorded more than 208 total volunteer hours in March and April clearing debris and invasive species along White Clay Creek.

On May 6, more than 850 visitors and exhibitors attended the White Clay Creek Fest: and more than 600 visitors, students, teachers and parents took part in White Clay Creek programs.

On May 12, programming staff and volunteers manned the Rockford Tower during the Wilmington Flower Market with 1,425 visitors climbing to the observation deck.

The week of May 25, burrowing owls at the Brandywine Zoo have started to re-clutch and now have four eggs. In the third clutch, none of the eggs are viable yet but we remain hopeful that one will hatch.

Congratulations to the 2016 staff of White Clay Creek for being voted, “Best State Park/Upstate” by *Delaware Today* readers.

On June 4, Auburn Heights’ Yorklyn Day was a resounding success with at least 1,200 people in attendance.

More than 7,000 visitors participated in the SPCA Mega Adoption Event at Bellevue on June 17 and 18. The fee booth revenue was calculated at over \$11,000. More than 1000 pets were adopted during the weekend.

Delaware Nature Society’s Joe Sebastiani and Jim White are tracking a Spotted Sandpiper nest at Yorklyn Village with fledglings seen in a small creek restored by DNREC. The sandpiper is listed as an S1 species in Delaware, with five or fewer known occurrences.

Results from Fish and Wildlife/Watershed Stewardship’s 2016 study on the uptake of toxic contaminants in stocked trout placed in the creek at Farm Lane, revealed for the first time in thirty years (last stocked in 1986), the Red Clay Creek water quality conditions are sufficient to consider placing it back in the rotation of stocked streams.

Inland Pond Region:

The weekend of April 28, Lums Pond campground was reserved by the Wilmington and Penn Treaty Kennel Clubs for their annual dog show with more than 1,000 dogs exhibited each day.

A total of 47 Canada goose eggs have been addled or oiled this season at Fort Delaware. Five school groups visited Pea Patch Island on May 3 and 4 with total attendance of 266 students and chaperones.

On June 24 and 25, Trap Pond State Park and Delaware State Parks hosted the third annual Governor’s Campout as a part of National Great Outdoors month.

The weekend of July 12 to 15, the *Warbirds over Delaware* event was held at the Lums Pond with approximately 200 pilots and 750 spectators. The event was covered by news organizations including 6ABC.

3. **Planning, Preservation and Development** – *Cindy Todd shared highlights from the Parks Council Report.*

Park Resource Office (PRO):

As outlined last quarter, the Division administers Federal Recreational Trail Program. RTP funds are passed through DelDOT from the Federal Highway Administration. PRO is assembling environmental and cultural resource documentation for Holts Landing

boardwalk, White Clay Creek Tri-Valley Trail, Lums Pond Little Jersey trailhead, Fork Branch Trail and Auburn Heights Preserve.

The Division received a one year extension on the submission of the SCORP (Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan). The Planner position responsible for handling this task has been vacant for a year.

In collaboration with the Delaware Department of Technology and Information (DTI), PRO maintains the outdoor recreation data for the Play Outside web application. The website allows users to search for different recreational amenities, parks, or trails throughout Delaware that are open to the public. Users can also enter a location or address and see what outdoor recreational opportunities are nearby.

maps.dnrec.delaware.gov/playoutside

Delaware State Parks, along with the Division of Fish and Wildlife, the Delaware Forest Service, and the Division of Historic and Cultural Affairs are the state agencies eligible for funding through the Open Space Program, which was created through the Land Protection Act ([7 Del. C. Ch. 75](#)). The Land Protection Act also created a Delaware Open Space Council to advise the Secretary of the Department of the Natural and Resources and Environmental Control on all matters relating to the administration, implementation, and financing of the Open Space Program, which is the conservation program where the agencies can purchase land or conservation easements to further their missions.

Office of Design and Development

Auburn Heights/NVF

Gun Club Road:

Utilities are under review for final installation. Stream restoration and construction will commence in late 2017.

Paper Mill and Auburn Heights:

New entrance, parking lots, trails and historic bridge are out to bid; construction to commence late fall 2017.

Amphitheater:

The amphitheater is currently under design; meetings have been held with the Delaware Symphony Orchestra. Bidding is anticipated in 2017.

Rail Road Turn Table:

Plaza, trail and bridge are under design, anticipated construction in late 2018.

Cape Henlopen State Park

Campground renovations are complete. A ribbon-cutting was held in late May 2017. The Division installed 100 AMP electric service, water hook ups, a playground and large pull-through sites.

Officers Club:

Complete roof replacement occurred in June. Mold and asbestos removal and ceiling patching and tile replacement were completed in July. HVAC will be installed in late summer 2017.

Waste Water Treatment Plant Upgrades:

A consultant contract is pending. Upon receipt, design and construction documents will begin. Per regulations, the Division must upgrade and manage the facility or tie into the City of Lewes' sewer. Up-front costs to tie in are very expensive. Repairs are necessary to be in compliance. It is anticipated that construction will begin in 2018.

Ron Mears asked if a club house will be built at Garrison's Lake. Cindy said last year the funding wasn't available but the Division hopes to have funding this year. This is still in the planning stage. Clyde commented that they don't charge a fee to rent a golf cart. Greg Abbott stated the cost of the rental is built into the cost of a round of golf. Greg added that the Division has focused efforts to promote Garrison's Lake.

Ron Mears asked if the Division has seen a significant increase in camping at Lums Pond. Greg Abbott stated that, "significant" does not do it justice. The numbers are huge." Ron stated that we need to plan a meeting at Lums Pond so that Council can see the improvements to the campground.

Ron Mears asked if Hammerheads is seeing a difference in customer numbers since the Big Chill opened. Greg Abbott shared that Hammerheads continues to grow. The Division is extending their contract for another five years.

Ron Mears asked if the Division was receiving a percentage of the money the Big Chill is collecting. The Big Chill put all capital investments in the property. The contract was structured as follows: Year one thru year three, they will pay the Division \$30K and 4% of their gross revenue over \$750K. Beginning in 2020 – 2031, they will pay the Division \$30K and 6% of all revenue collected. Ray said our gate entry revenues have increased since they opened. We are staffing the fee booth in the evening now. Clyde asked if Big Chill was making deliveries to the campground and beach patrons. Ray said they have not begun providing that service yet. Patrons of the restaurant use the same bathroom facilities as beach visitors.

Fee machines will be placed in the park later this season as part of a pilot program.

Solar panel installation is underway on the Endicott section of Fort Delaware. Harbor Stone Construction has installed the support system. H&A Electrical contractor is installing solar panels and connections with completed in mid-summer. PSE&G are our partners in providing green energy at the fort.

Trail construction (Phase I) of the Tri Valley Trail at White Clay Creek is underway. The trail was open to the public on July 4. Restroom, final clean up, and parking lot overlay are anticipated in late summer 2017. Minor trail closing will occur at that time. Phase II (trail design) should be completed by late summer, the bid process should take place in the fall and installation will happen in 2018.

Wilmington State Parks

Josephine Fountain:

The Division has a contract pending with Aegis Restauro, LLC for \$205,000. Restoration is anticipated to begin in late summer.

Brandywine Zoo

Tiger Exhibit:

Demolition of the exhibit is complete. Repurposing of the area is underway, including an amphitheater and tent area. Anticipated completion date is late summer.

Master Plan:

A contract is pending with contractor GWWO/CLR on master plan update. The report is anticipated in mid - 2018. GWWO brought in a zoo specialist to assist with this plan.

Queuing docks will be installed at the Indian River Marina late this year or early next. Dredging has been completed.

VIII. Old Business

The City of Wilmington's task force on Baynard Stadium has concluded its work. The City requested proposals from any interested party. Only Salesianum responded. Salesianum will submit a proposal for review by the City. The proposal includes enlarging the track to 8 lanes, widening the field to include soccer, building a new office for Wilmington State Parks and a new maintenance shop. If the proposal is accepted, the Division would no longer be responsible for maintenance at the stadium. The Division would be responsible for security.

The TriValley Trail is open and busy. Matt Ritter attended the last WCC Advisory Council meeting and got good reviews and feedback about the trail. Greg Johnson thought the Park staff did an excellent job throughout the entire trail building and design process.

The Beach Access Coalition did not want surf fishing in front of neighborhoods in Fenwick and the Indian Harbor Villas. Groups from all sides of the issue have met with the Secretary and Ray. The Division will not be designating any part of the beach for swimming only. It is a mixed use shared beach, first come first served. Signs have been posted at beach access crossing letting visitors know that the beach is a multi-use amenity. The Division will be producing videos to train folks on how to surf fish. Courtesy/beach etiquette will be highlighted in the videos.

The Division received a report that someone had dug a three foot ditch in the sand at Fenwick. They had been leaving chairs and tents on the site overnight. The Division assigned a ranger to access the beach at 5:00 a.m. to confiscate the items. The Division will determine which community has been leaving these items and will send a letter to the community as someone can be seriously injured whether they are in a vehicle or walking. Ron Mears asked the Division's policy on digging large holes in the sand and related that a beachgoer died last week in Ocean City when a hole collapsed and she suffocated. Ray said that our lifeguards are diligent about discouraging digging holes on the beach.

Clyde Shipman asked how the single-stack program worked this season at Cape. Matt Ritter explained that the Piping Plover nest at Gordon's Pond failed so the beach was open through the whole season; having that area opened through the whole season helped to reduce the number of conflicts.

The color of the surf tags has been changed to blue and yellow at the request of the surf fishermen.

Delaware Mobile Surf Fisherman (DMS) president Bruce West is very engaged. At DMS meetings, it is not unusual to have five or six legislators in attendance. At every meeting, DMS members ask for additional rangers.

IX. New Business

Pickle Ball

Representatives from the first State Pickle Ball Club, Kathy Casey, Ann Farley and Tony Lingenfelter, made a presentation regarding pickle ball. Pickle ball is a cross between ping pong, badminton, and tennis.

A video was shared and narrated by Kathy.

Kathy stated that pickle ball is addictive and motivates people to get involved in life. It is not difficult to learn and it is easy to play. It is fun for all ages. The club would like to introduce it to children as it is, "something really cool to do." In 2015, there were only about 50 people playing in Delaware, today the membership stands at 400 people and 700 people are playing pickle ball.

The group shared a proposal to build 24 pickle ball courts at Wolfe Neck. They would like to build indoor and outdoor courts as many senior citizens cannot be in the heat and sun. Four pickle ball courts will fit into the same sized area as one championship tennis court.

The Club feels that building this court would bring players from all over the country; making Sussex County "a destination". There is an RV Pickle Ball Association made up of campers who travel throughout the country camping in areas where there are pickle ball courts.

The Club is requesting that the Division commits land for this use. Tony has been playing pickle ball since 2006. He lives part-time in Sun City Arizona and plays pickle ball in Delaware and Arizona. He has seen huge growth in participation since 2006. At the 30th anniversary of the National Senior Games, Delaware had 20 representatives and representatives from the First State brought home two gold medals.

If the State commits the land, the Pickle Ball Club will generate \$3-\$4M in funding for this project through public/private partnerships. A potential path forward would include identifying the location, and developing a site plan. Eventually a concessionaire would be responsible for the courts. Courts would be available for use by the public when there is not a tournament scheduled because the mission of the Club is to promote the game. The

Club feels that these courts would be beneficial to Delaware's economy and would put "heads in beds" during the shoulder season.

The First State Pickle Ball Club has been approached to hold the regional tournament but Delaware doesn't currently have 24 courts in a single location which is necessary to host the tournament.

Bob Ehemann voiced concern about whether folks would travel to Wolfe Neck's secluded location to use the courts. Kathy stated that the Club would hold clinics and invite people to come. Bob wondered if the courts would be empty when there was not a tournament scheduled. Tony said that similar to tennis courts, there would be times when the pickle ball courts are empty but that people don't mind traveling to play pickle ball.

Council asked the presenters to leave the room so they could freely discuss the proposal. Concerns of the Council included whether the Pickle Ball Club was "married" to this location, the Division hasn't had the opportunity to do storm water management assessments at the site, the need to open the opportunity for dedicated lands to other activities/groups, and the practicality/feasibility of placing these courts at Wolfe Neck.

Ray shared that the plan is to complete the construction of the courts in phases. The courts would be built on 6 acres that is currently in Agricultural lease. There would be a multi-use parking lot for this area which would include the pickle ball courts, the Wolf House, the new bathroom facility and the trail head. Phase I would include the building of 12 courts. Ray stated that with growth in the area, Wolfe Neck may become a hub for activity. Pickle ball is the fastest growing sport in the nation not just for senior citizens but also for baby boomers. Ed asked Ray's opinion of the proposal. Ray was very positive.

Ron Mears stated that if pickle ball is that popular, "Parks wants to be involved in the action". Greg Johnson stated it is a great opportunity but that the Division needs to make sure this is a viable so that Parks doesn't end up with another failed project or that the task of running the site does not fall to park staff who are already over loaded. Ed Lewandowski asked if there is a "technical plan". Ray stated that generally the Division doesn't ask for that.

Ray feels pickle ball is similar to tennis and disc golf but with those activities, the Division is responsible for building the sites and the associations help to maintain them.

Council expressed a concern that if we designate land to for this group, other groups will request that land be designated for their specific activity.

Council discussed making a recommendation to move forward with a study regarding building pickle ball courts. Brenda Bramble asked if a recommendation from the Council would represent a commitment to build the courts. Council agreed there should be no obligation until results of the study were determined. Clyde stated that an important part of this process is public input. Ray stated that in order to get public input there has to be a feasible plan to present.

Ray stated that the money would have to be raised before the ground is broken. We would not put in the utilities and the parking lot and then hope that the money comes for the courts later.

Ron Breeding made a motion for the Division to move forward with a study for a pickle ball complex at Wolfe Neck. Jan Durham seconded the motion without a commitment (an obligation to design/build the project). The motion carried unanimously.

X. Upcoming Events

- Next meeting November 2, 2017 – Location to be determined

XI. Meeting Adjournment

The chairman called for a motion to adjourn. Ron Breeding made a motion to adjourn, Clyde Shipman seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 12:04 p.m.